MAKING TRACKS

BIG BUTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

MAY 1999 SPRING EDITION

"We need visions for larger things"

WE WANT OUR TRAIN BACK . . .

Students Send Letters Across the Country

by Joyce Hailicka

Americans have had a fascination for trains ever since Peter Cooper launched his Tom Thumb locomotive in 1830. And now the students in Mr. Sipple's 4th grade class are interested in helping to raise money and interest in bringing back the Medco 4-Spot. The history project is the brainchild of 4th grade teacher, John Sipple.

The Southern Oregon Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society are doing the difficult

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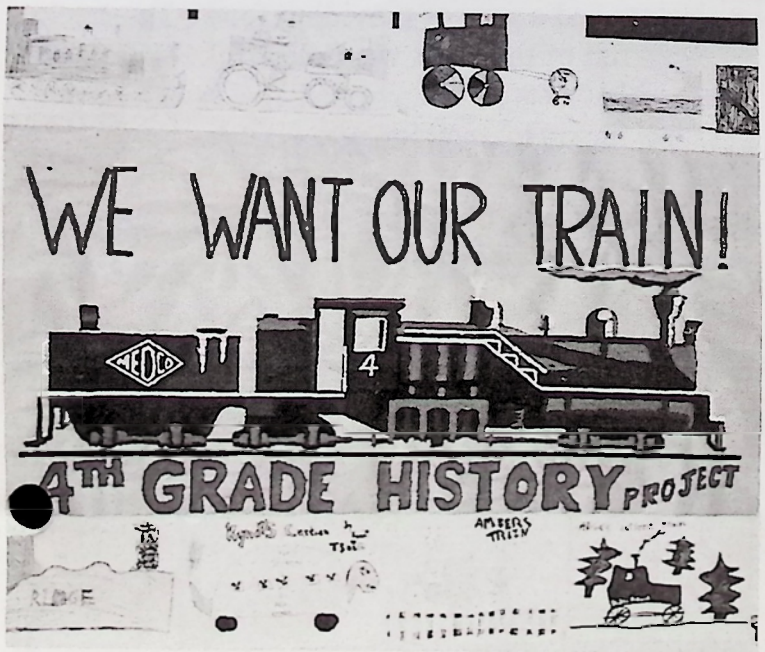

She Was a Good Woman:

A Look at Kizzie Edmondson

by Joyce Hailicka

Some people have come and gone, but their memory lingers on. They were men and women who left an indelible imprint on the town. Kizzie Edmondson was one of those people.

For many years, it has been written, that Kizzie Edmondson was a sort of "one-woman institution". Kizzie and her husband, Ben, moved to Butte Falls when it was just a tent town in the tall timbers.

The Butte Falls Sugar Pine Company was set up. The year was 1905. It was the year that Ernest W. Smith graduated from the eighth grade. His father, Edgar, taught grades two through eight. Upon graduation from the eighth grade, Ernest took and passed a teacher's exam. He took over his father's position until 1906 when School District No. 91 was formed.

As the town was forming, timber was "king". The mill was the beginning of what would become the Town of Butte Falls. Tents housed the workers employed by the mill. Kizzie's husband, Ben Edmondson, worked along the banks of Big Butte Creek. Ben worked at the water mill.

Before the town was formed, Bert Harris was president of the Butte Falls Sugar Pine Company. Bert planned the homesites, streets, park, and

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(Train continued from page 1)

task of purchasing and restoring the engine and cars for an excursion train in Butte Falls. It is the hope of many that the Town will get permission from existing landowners to operate the train on a portion of the original railroad grade.

The NRHS was approached several years ago to see if they were interested in undertaking the project. What was then a handful of railroad buffs with a real life fantasy for trains, got fired up and rolled up their sleeves and started to work. Under the direction of Jerry Hellinga, an engineer for the Sumpter, Oregon train, a diligent army of volunteers began to search for the original Medco engines. They located and obtained the Medco 4-Spot, as well as the Baldwin diesel locomotive.

Members amassed a variety of discarded train cars and parts. Their patience, enthusiasm, and persistence paid off as the project began to come together. The kids have raised over $400 for the train.

The Iron Horse has a unique place in Butte Falls' history. You can become a part of this project by sending a small contribution to the SOUTHERN OREGON CHAPTER, Shortline Fund, P. O. Box 622, Medford, OR 97501.

"The challenge is in the moment. The time is always now."

THOSE WERE THE GOOD OLD DAYS

This is another in a series of articles on looking back at events that shaped our lives. We spoke to people who lived through the Depression years in Butte Falls. We asked things like, what was life like? How did people get by without all the conveniences we know now? Here are some of the answers:

"Most of the homes around the area were small and heated by a wood-burning, cast-iron stove. Neighbors were friendly and helped each other. Bartering was common. Almost everyone had a garden, but they didn't all grow the same thing. Chickens, cows, and gardens provided a stable food supply.

When one person went to town, they would buy in bulk and divide it among the neighbors and family. Trips to town were made, maybe once a month. Roads were dirt, not even graveled.

The gas station was located where the post office now stands. Fuel didn't seem to be a problem. Gas lanterns provided light, as needed. A wood furnace kept the school rooms warm.

Deer was abundant, and so were elk and fish. As for guns, just about everyone had one hanging on the wall, standing in the corner, or fastened above the front door.

Nature had a way of providing food. The creeks were full of fish. Elk were plentiful. There were good harvests of blackberries and huckleberries. Most important, nothing was wasted.

The town was beautiful and peaceful, not much different than it is today."

BOARD MEMBERS

Cory Hamann (President) **Dan Murphy** **Joyce Hailicka, Chairman**
Charleen Brown **Ellen Moore**

THE BILL EDMONDSON MEMORIAL MUSEUM AND CABOOSE HOURS
FRIDAY 1- 4 P.M., SATURDAY 10 - 4 P.M. AND SUNDAY 1-4 P.M.

HOSTESS: **KAETE THOMPSON 865-3333**
NELLIE RAGSDALE 865-3332

(Kizzie Edmondson continued from page 1)

business district which would become the town which was given the name Butte Falls. The mill provided lumber for constructing the new town.

From these simple beginnings, a precedent would be set for years to come. The town would be approximately fifty-five acres. A three-hundred foot square would be in the center. This square would encompass a park that would later be named the Ernest W. Smith Memorial Park, named after the early resident who took a correspondence course in engineering and got a job with the Butte Falls Sugar Pine Company, before Owen-Oregon took over.

Butte Falls was to become an ideal town. The Edmondson's watched Butte Falls grow from a "tent town" to a rapidly progressing community. The town could boast in having some of the finest timber in the country. It had pure mountain gravity-fed water for the town's residents. And the falls produced enough force to provide electricity for lighting and other uses. Eventually Butte Falls provided timber, as well as delicious mountain spring water for Medford and the surrounding valley below.

Although I never met Kizzie Edmondson face to face, I can't help but think that her role in the community played a significant part in the development of the town. Kizzie was the mother of five children, including a set of twins. She also worked for the Butte Falls schools. For 21 years she served as the recorder for the Town of Butte Falls.

Kizzie Edmondson was the town librarian until she was well into her eighties. Her daughter, Jiggs (Chambers), served as her assistant. Kizzie was a mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, as well as a valuable asset to the community. She had many roles in the community and she did them all well.

The role she played was no easy task for a wife and working mother of five, and later a widow. Kizzie left her indelible mark in the minds and hearts of those who knew and loved her. Sometimes the real difference a person makes can only be measured by the passage of time. And sometimes the greatest contributions we make as human beings can only be explained in the simplest of ways - "She was a good woman."

The Big Butte Historical Society's Children's Summer Heritage Program

With the arrival of spring, summer is just around the corner. We hope children will come out and help us celebrate summer with lots of fun scheduled activities for children of all ages at the museum. There will be trails to hike, pictures to take, and stories to tell. We have adults in the community willing to help us get the Children's Summer Heritage Program up and running. Someone may be calling you to ask for help. Please join us!

HANDY TRIVIA

Did you know?

In 1932 the name of Crater Lake National Forest was changed to Rogue River National Forest to lessen confusion with Crater Lake National Park. Other names that were being considered were: Jackson, Jefferson, Harrison, McLoughlin, Hamilton, Roosevelt, Big Pine, and others.

A BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE: Students Pave the Way

American author, William Faulkner, once said, "The past is never dead - it is not even the past." In order to understand the present, it is important to gain some understanding of the conditions which made us who we are today. The same holds true for people, as well as places like Butte Falls, Oregon.

For many people, it is difficult to embrace the far distant past and present at the same time. It is even more difficult to synthesize the abstract and concrete notions of what makes a place like Butte Falls so special. Is it the nature beauty? The climate? The water? The people? Or is it a bit of all these things and more?

If you ask different people what makes Butte Falls so special, you'll get different answers. But one aspect of community that young and old alike seem to agree upon is, "Butte Falls feels like one big family." As members of the community, it is good to ask ourself what role we want to play in the community. How does what we do today matter in the future?

Ask three students who have taken on community service projects for the Jim Matthews Memorial Scholarship, how it has changed their lives to give something of themselves back to the community. All three young people are seniors — two young men and one young woman. Maggie Harrington proposed a 30-foot bridge. Charlie McLauchlan, Jr. proposed a new road and sign for the falls road. And Jeremy McKibben has undertaken a parking area and historic marker at the falls. Will they succeed? They already have.

Each student understands his or her role in school and in the community. Each has learned in a few short months, what the years try to teach us slowly and with difficulty. Once you get an idea in which you believe in with all your heart, you will be able to work it out. Most of the work, time, and materials have been donated by members of the community, family, and friends. We would like to thank these young people and those who supported them for helping to make these valuable contributions to the community.

— BBHS Board and Members

"Nothing in the history of the universe is attained by doing nothing. You must always give something to get something"

PLEASE JOIN US!

MAIL TO:
Big Butte Historical Society
P. O. Box 379, Butte Falls, OR 97522

Now that you heard about BBHS, why not get to know us even better by becoming a volunteer! We'll look forward to having you join us!

Name _____

Affiliation _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Here's how I can be of help:

_____ I'd like to _____

_____ Tell me more about being a board member.

_____ I could be a guest speaker. My topic: _____

_____ I'd like to help with fundraising efforts.

_____ I do not have time to volunteer at this time but I would like to make a monetary contribution to this organization.

On vacation last fall, my husband and I visited Butte Falls in hopes of at least an outside look at Uncle Ernest and Aunt Lucy Smith's old home, now the Edmondson Museum.

A chance encounter at the Post Office with Joyce Hailicka turned a drive by tour into a very person guided tour both inside and out. I was deeply touched by the honors bestowed on Uncle Ernest and especially enjoyed the room dedicated to Aunt Lucy (my father's sister), her "sewing room". The baby quilts she made for my children have been saved for their children. I was thrilled to give my daughter her quilt for our first grandson, Daulton James, appropriately nicknamed "Outlaw" by his grandpa. Enclosed is a picture of them in their living room.

Patty Love
Fairland, OK

The above article was sent to us by Ernest and Lucy's niece, Patty Love, from Fairland, Oklahoma. She sent two photographs - the one seen here and the one to be hung in her Aunt Lucy's sewing room. Thanks, Patty.

Pictures from the Past

Do you have an early photo of Butte Falls? Send it along with the story behind it (be sure to tell us the location and names of the people in the picture) and the approximate date it was taken.

We'll take good care of your photo. Include your name, address, and phone number for safe return of your photo.

Visitor Information:

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Caboose	436	627	593	557	539
Smith House			463	875	962

Where do our visitors come from?

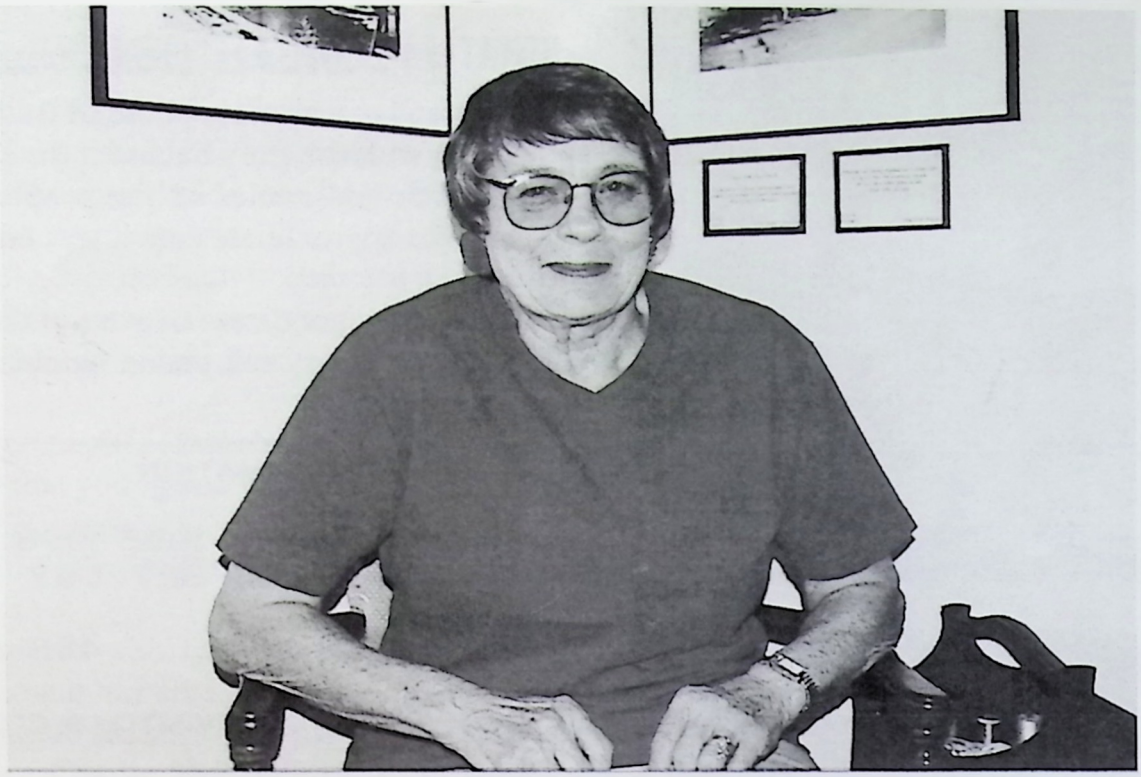
Alaska, Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, California, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Mississippi, Minnesota, Louisiana, North Carolina, Nevada, Utah, New York, New Mexico, Texas, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

International Visitors -

Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, England, New Zealand, Philippines, Mexico.

A special thanks to Charleen Brown for helping to develop the Fairy Glen Nature Trail. Soon we will all be able to enjoy a stroll on the former Medco railroad grade adjacent to the elementary school yard. Lovely wildflowers, birds, and insects will soon await you. Senior, Maggie Harrington, is working on putting in a bridge on the trail. Mr. and Mrs. Dave Erickson donated their portion of the land for use by the town for ten years to be used as a trail. Many donations of materials have come from businesses and volunteers have helped to make this project possible.

Funding from the Southern Oregon Historical Society and the Oregon Community Foundation were instrumental in making this historical trail possible. BBHS helped provide funding for signage. Happy trails to you . . .



Ellen Moore is the newest Board Member for the Big Butte Historical Society. Ellen has been a great asset to many Butte Falls organizations through the years. We are glad to have her on board with the historical society.

AXES AND JACKS: EARLY TIMBER DAYS

by Joyce Hailicka

Many early loggers got their start using only hand tools. With a double bit axe and a jack, some men made their fortunes. But the work was back-breaking and downright dangerous. It wasn't unusual for a man to lose a limb or even a life.

Some wanted to do everything according to his own ideas. Others thought they could handle any job or challenge the woods would give him. And there were even some who worked in the woods their entire lives.

In the good old days, timber was plentiful. And opportunities for loggers were plentiful, too. The spirit to venture out and seize opportunities was handed from father to son. Everywhere a person looked was the sight of timber. Men, young and old alike, risked their lives to achieve the impossible with sweat, labor, endurance, and ingenuity.

Loggers worked at the mercy of nature and imperfect tools. One way or another the logger did his work. It is through all obstacles and pitfalls in the woods, that come the treasure house of memories. There are dozens of stories about the early logging days in Butte Falls. The passing of years lend enchantment to these stories. Have you heard a good one or know one you'd like to share with us? Do you have a picture to go with it? We'd like a good story or two for the next "Making Tracks" newsletter.

Mail copy to the Big Butte Historical Society or leave at either the Caboose Museum or The Bill Edmondson Museum.

OUR SUMMER CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY LISTING

The following is a list of tentative ideas for programs for children ages 4 to 14 years old. Each year the Big Butte Historical Society puts on learning activities for children of all ages.

This year the following programs have been suggested:

REACH FOR THE STARS

Calling all future stars of stage and screen. Learn how to use creative drama and improvisation to act out a historical story. Create your own script. Invite family and friends to a mini-performance on the platform stage at the Depot.

ART DABBLER

Join our museum artist, Nellieann Ragsdale, for a chance to "dabble" in drawing and sketching techniques. Kids will create clipboard sketches on scenes in the community.

TEA FOR TWO

Hostess, Joann Lyon, will greet you with "tea and crumpets". What is a crumpet? Put on your best going-to-town clothes and grab your hat. You're in for a wonderfully-elegant afternoon at the E.W. Smith House. So stroll on down memory lane and bring a friend. And you'll learn about crumpets and a whole lot more. Student hostesses – Jacque Lyon and Jessica Dunlap.

TAKE A HIKE

Be a trailblazer. Take a hike down Fairy Glen Nature Trail with storyteller, Charleen Brown. Hear the story about how Fairy Glen got its name. Learn the name of plants and wildflowers. Snacks provided. Student guide – Maggie Harrington.

IT'S A BUG LIFE!

This is one you won't want to miss. The "Bug Mobile" comes to town. Learn about the interesting lives of these tiny, mysterious creatures. Host, Roger Fishman, will bring his "friends" and introduce you to the wonderful world of nature. Student – Heidi McLauchlan. Snacks provided (bug juice, chocolate covered ants, and gummy worms).

TURN TRASH INTO TREASURES

Design your own wearable art from an assortment of things you would normally throw away. Bottle cap earrings? Newspaper hats? Plastic garbage bag gowns? And much, much more. Members of the Butte Falls Recycling Club will be on hand to assist. Friends and family, get out your camera for the unforgettable "Thrashin' Fashion Show" of the year. Fashion coordinator – Dianne Gorman. Student assistants – members of the recycling club.

DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING

Did you ever want to be a news reporter, a filmmaker, or someone who makes history? You'll make your own documentary, on-location in Butte Falls. Students will team up in small groups to create ideas, plan footage, learn to use camera, and shoot footage. Student teacher – Sarah Lawrence.

A HOUSE FOR FEATHERED FRIENDS

Here's your chance to build a birdhouse all your own. Using hammer, nails, and your imagination – boys and girls will design, construct, and decorate your own birdhouse to take home. Adult instructor, Arlan Ragsdale will assist.

TRACING YOUR FAMILY TREE (a genealogy workshop for kids)

Genealogy instructor, Charleen Brown, will show children basic techniques for learning who your ancestors are.

CLASSIC BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY

Butte Falls is an ideal location to shoot pictures. Who knows what you'll find? Students will go on a scavenger hunt with camera and photograph items or people they find. Join student photographer, Maggie James, from Prospect, to learn basic techniques of B/W photography.

POET-TREE WORKSHOP

Children will write poems about summer and create a book of poetry, with writer and poet, Joyce Hailicka.

* No classes 4th of July weekend or Labor Day weekend. Vacation Bible School week of July 12-16. No museum classes.